

# Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

*A special programme, in the form of a “letter”, designed for Gaelic learners who already have some knowledge of the language. A short vocabulary and comments on points of grammar and figures of speech are included with the text. If you have comments, Ruairidh can be contacted at [roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk](mailto:roddy.maclean@bbc.co.uk). This is Litir 393. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 89 corresponds to Litir 393.*

Bha mi ag innse dhuibh an t-seachdain sa chaidh mu Bhàr Inbhir Èireann – no na *Culbin Sands* – ann am Moireibh agus mar a dh’fhalbh na daoine a bha a’ fuireach ann. Thachair sin ann an sia ceud deug, naochad ’s a ceithir (1694). Chòmhdaich gainmheach an talamh-àitich. Chòmhdaich, agus taighean nan daoine. Chan eil ann a-nise ach giùthsach.

’S e an sgeulachd “thraidiseanta” a dh’innis mi dhuibh. Tha i a’ tighinn thugainn, gu ìre co-dhiù, à beul-aithris. Tha firinn innte, gun teagamh, ach tha e doirbh a bhith cinnteach an e an fhìrinn ghlan a th’ againn. A bheil e fìor, mar eisimpleir, gun do thachair an sgrios anns an aon stoirm, thairis air dha no thrì latha?

Ge bith dè cho luath ’s a thachair e, tha fios againn gun do thachair e. Bha sluagh anns an àite uaireigin. Bha an t-àite torrach. An-diugh chan eil ann ach coille, agus tòrr gainmhich fon choille. Ach tha a’ cheist againn fhathast – dè dh’adhbharaich an sgrios. Bha a’ ghainmheach ann fada roimhe sin. Carson anns a’ bhliadhna sin a chaidh a sguabadh thairis air an fhearann a bh’ air cùl a’ chladaich? Tha feadhainn dhen bheachd gur e mac an duine fhèin a bu choireach.

Faisg air a’ chladach, eadar Uisge Narann is Uisge Èireann cha robh clach ann airson taighean a thogail. Cha robh rathaidean ann nas motha, airson clach a thoirt a-steach don àite. Air sàilleabh sin, cha do chleachd na daoine bochda clach airson an taighean a thogail. Chleachd iad sgrathan an àite clach. Chleachd iad sgrathan cuideachd airson ballachan no gàrraidhean a thogail. Chuala mi am facal *airbh* – no airbh – ann an Siorrachd Rois airson a leithid. Airbh – *a turf wall*. Ach chan eil fhios agam dè am facal a bh’ aca ann am Moireibh.

Càite an d’ fhuair na daoine na sgrathan a bha a dhìth orra gach bliadhna? Uill, a rèir choltais, fhuair bho na seann dùin-ghainmhich, a bh’ air an còmhdachadh le ùir, air cùl a’ chladaich. **Dh’fhàg sin** nach robh na seann dùin – **a chaidh a chruthachadh na ceudan, ’s dòcha na mìltean, bhliadhnaichean roimhe** – air an dìon tuilleadh an aghaidh na gaoithe. Ann an stoirm, bhiodh a’ ghainmheach air a sgapadh.

Chan e sin a-mhàin ach, aig an àm ud, bha mullaichean tughaidh aig na daoine bochda. Agus càite an d’ fhuair iad an tughadh? Uill, spion iad am muran a bha a’ fàs air na dùin-ghainmhich as ùire. ’S e muran feur a tha a’ fàs air gainmheach ri taobh na mara – *marram grass* ann am Beurla. Agus nuair a dh’fhalbh am muran, cha robh càil ann a dhìonadh a’ ghainmheach an aghaidh na gaoithe. Mean air mhean, bha na daoine a’ cruthachadh suidheachadh èiginneach dhaibh fhèin.

Mus do thachair an sgrios bha daoine ag aithris mu stoirmean gainmhich anns an sgìre sin. Bho àm gu àm bhiodh Comhairle Inbhir Narann a’ cur casg air daoine bho bhith a’ buain sgrathan. Ach lean iad orra, a dh’aindeoin sin.

Bliadhna às dèidh na stoirme mòire, rinn an t-uachdaran à Bàr Inbhir Èireann – Alexander Kinnaird – tagradh do Phàrlamaid na h-Alba. Bha e ag iarraidh lughdachadh anns na cìsean a dh’fheumadh e pàigheadh don riaghaltas. Bha an dàrna cuid dhen oighreachd aige fo ghainmheach, thuirt e. Chuir a’ Phàrlamaid achd an sàs, ga dhèanamh mì-laghail a bhith a’ spìonadh muran air dùin-ghainmhich cladaichean na h-Alba. Ach bha e ro fhadalach airson Bàr Inbhir Èireann, agus b’ e Alexander Kinnaird an t-uachdaran mu dheireadh ann.

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**Faclan na Litreach:** Bàr Inbhir Èireann: *Culbin Sands*; giùthsach: *pine wood*; torrach: *fertile*; ballachan, gàrraidhean: *walls (usually stone)*; dùin-ghainmhich: *sand dunes*; Comhairle Inbhir Narann: *Nairn Town Council*.

**Abairtean na Litreach:** chòmhdach gainmheach an talamh-àitich: *sand covered the agricultural land*; tha i a’ tighinn thugainn à beul-aithris: *it comes to us from oral tradition*; gun do thachair an sgrios anns an aon stoirm: *that the destruction happened in one storm*; ge bith dè cho luath ’s a thachair e: *however quickly it happened*; tòrr gainmhich fon choille: *much sand under the forest*; carson a chaidh a sguabadh?: *why was it swept?*; gur e mac an duine fhèin a bu chuireach: *that Man himself was responsible*; eadar Uisge Narann is Uisge Èireann: *between the Nairn River and the Findhorn River*; cha robh rathaidean ann nas motha: *neither were there roads*, chleachd iad sgrathan an àite clach: *they used turf [cut pieces of turf] instead of stone*; a bha a dhìth orra: *which they required*; a bh’ air an còmhdachadh le ùir: *which were covered by soil*; mullaichean tughaidh: *thatched roofs*; spìon iad am muran: *they pulled out the marram grass*; a dhìonadh a’ ghainmheach an aghaidh na gaoithe: *which would protect the sand against the wind*; bha iad a’ cruthachadh suidheachadh èiginneach dhaibh fhèin: *they were creating a critical situation for themselves*; casg air daoine bho bhith a’ buain sgrathan: *a ban on people cutting turf*; lean iad orra, a dh’aindeoin sin: *they continued, despite that*; lughdachadh anns na cìsean a dh’fheumadh e pàigheadh: *a reduction in the taxes he had to pay*; bha an dàrna cuid dhen oighreachd aige fo ghainmheach: *half of his estate was under sand*.

**Puing-chànain na Litreach:** a chaidh a chruthachadh na ceudan, ’s dòcha na mìltean, bhliadhnaichean roimhe: *which were created hundreds, perhaps thousands, of years before*. Note that we insert the article before ceudan and mìltean (although you could get away without it) whereas it is not present in English. Note also that bliadhnaichean is lenited ie bhliadhnaichean. This is because it is in the genitive plural case following a noun of quantity – mìltean (and ceudan) – we are saying “thousands of years” (as is normal in English also). In the genitive plural, with the article, there would be no lenition eg thar nam bliadhnaichean but without the article we lenite the noun eg mòran bhliadhnaichean.

**Gnàths-cainnt na Litreach:** Dh’fhàg sin nach robh na seann dùin air an dìon tuilleadh an aghaidh na gaoithe: *that meant that the old dunes were no longer protected against the wind*.

\* Tha “Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh” air a maoineachadh le Seirbheis nam Meadhanan Gàidhlig.